

CHAPTER XI

THE EBBING OF THE TIDE

ON May 4, 1863, Curry reached home on his return from Richmond, and announced himself a candidate for re-election to the Confederate Congress. His district comprised the four counties of Calhoun, Randolph, Talladega and Shelby. For a while after his announcement he had no opposition. Then a candidate appeared in the person of Marcus Cruikshanks, whom Curry speaks of as "a very worthy man." Curry addressed to him a communication, suggesting that they canvass the district together,—a proposition which Mr. Cruikshanks declined. The latter's supporters adopted the dangerous and effective policy of a modern "still hunt." They engaged in no open arguments, and conducted their political program with a secrecy which proved to be invincible. "Silence is the true eloquence of power," said a great French statesman, "because it admits of no reply." Curry was unable to answer the insidious attacks of his political enemies, or to withstand the logic of events which were now proving potent arguments against the doctrines of secession and of State rights. At the election in August, 1863, Curry was defeated, his opponent carrying three out of the four counties of the district, and leaving him only a small majority in the county of Calhoun.

The arguments of word and of event, which had proved so overwhelming in their results, were not

very far to seek when the smoke of the political battle cleared away.

The district, as constituted, had been originally opposed to secession. At the time of the election Vicksburg had fallen before the victorious forces of Grant; and the reverses to the Confederate arms in Pennsylvania and in Tennessee had alike served to dispirit a people who had not been sanguine of success from the beginning. A secret peace organization had sprung up in the district. Deserters from the army were multiplying in numbers, and sowing the seeds of discontent among those with whom they came in contact. The volunteers had long since gone to the front, many of them never to return; and a conscription, which had already begun, of dire necessity, to take the old men and the young alike, "robbing both the cradle and the grave," was now arousing a spirit of ill-concealed hostility. "General Hard Times" had assumed command in the Confederacy. The currency became every day of less value. A Confederate paper dollar, that had been worth a dollar and ten cents in the August of two years before, had now depreciated to such an extent that it took from twelve to thirteen such dollars in August, 1863, to equal in value a dollar of gold. Taxes were high, and the tax-gatherer of the government was establishing granaries, in which were stored the government's exacted fractions and tithes of the meagre crops raised by the old men, and women and children, and the negro slaves. A barrel of flour in March, 1863, cost in the Confederacy twenty-five Confederate dollars. In February of that year, the money value of a day's rations for one hundred soldiers,

which in the first year of the war had been nine dollars, was at market prices one hundred and twenty-three. Salt, which had advanced in the first year of the struggle from ten to eighteen dollars a sack, was still going up in price with a steadiness which the salt "licks" and springs of Tennessee, the Indian Territory and Southwest Virginia, seemed powerless to counteract. A cordon of blockading Federal vessels shut out the markets of the world from the great staple, which so short a time before had been endowed with a royal appellation, and "King Cotton" was dethroned. The blockade-runners, from Nassau in the Bahamas to Wilmington in North Carolina, brought in, under the stress of darkness and ever imminent danger, scanty supplies of medicines and surgical necessities; but there was little help from the outside world for the environed South.

Out of this pressure of poverty and distress were generated the demagogue and the malcontent, who availed themselves, with sinister purpose and successful accomplishment, of the depressing circumstances that existed to inflame the prejudices of the weak-hearted and the poverty-stricken against secession and secessionists.

Curry's whole political career, his open and consistent advocacy of political doctrines, which were now denounced as the causes and origin of the war, afforded a shining target for attack. He had been an arch-secessionist; and he was still in favor of a vigorous prosecution of the struggle. It was not alone upon the ignorant and the credulously disaffected that delusive promises of an early peace had their telling and depressing effect.

His defeat for re-election brought him many expressions of sorrow and regret from all parts of the Confederacy; and the news was received with down-cast hearts, and with universal sympathy throughout the South, among those whom he denominates "the true and faithful." It was no time for idleness or re-pining, and Curry immediately turned from statesmanship, in which he delighted, to war, which he abhorred.

On the 22nd of September, 1863, he went out with a company of "Home Guards," to aid in an impending battle; but the great fight at Chickamauga had occurred before they reached the army.

"I went over the battle-field," he writes, "before the Federal dead were buried, and then visited the army occupying Missionary Ridge, Lookout Mountain, and the Valley between. From Lookout Mountain one of the grandest views in the world is presented. The two armies,—the Federals were in Chattanooga,—lay at the beholder's feet."

On October 10, 1863, he reached home from the seat of war. In the early part of November he visited Perry county, and shortly thereafter spent a few days at Montgomery, where the legislature of the State was in session. Although he makes no mention of it in his *memorabilia*, his friends and admirers appear at this time to have planned his election to the Confederate States Senate, as is indicated by a letter found among his papers.

TALLADEGA, ALA.,

Nov. 13, 1863.

HON. THOMAS B. COOPER,

MY DEAR SIR:—In the first place excuse (you would have done that without the asking, if paper is as scarce in your office as in mine,) this blank-book paper. In the

second place, you will excuse an old friend, for venturing to intercede with you for help, if he needs it, for one whom he ardently desires to be promoted by the Legislature. I mean the Hon. J. L. M. Curry, who is a candidate for the Confederate States Senate. I know not your predilections on that subject; nor do I know who are the most prominent competitors of Mr. Curry. I know this much, however, that I have nothing to say in disparagement of any of them. But I feel very anxious to have Mr. Curry in the Senate, because I know him well, and know him to be a pure man, as well as a man of brilliant talents and extraordinary working qualities. I know of no man in the State or Confederacy of more promising qualities for usefulness in Congress; and there is none of purer morals, or more unbending integrity. Besides, I think the time has come when West Alabama should be known to the country. Heretofore the idea has been, that no man, however talented,—however sound in political sentiment,—however pure in character,—could have his claims to represent the State in the National Senate considered, unless he could have the geographical recommendation of a residence in North Alabama or South Alabama. East and West Alabama have been ignored. But at the extra session you took from West Alabama her patriotic Jemison. If you will now secure for East Alabama her just but long-deferred claims to a name and a place in the State by electing our young and gifted Curry, I think the work of reform, in this respect, will be in the right direction and at the right time.

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I shall regard it as a personal favor, and what is more, a public good, if you will throw your influence in favor of Mr. Curry.

We are all well.

Your friend truly,

GEO. S. WALDON.

But the efforts of Curry's advocates were unavailing. Whether his "geographical residence," so earnestly urged by his friend, Waldon, as a ground of his election, put him at a disadvantage; whether the same potent causes which had compassed his defeat for the House of Representatives at the hands of a popular constituency four months before, were again at work among the members of the legislature; whether his claims were not vigorously and aggressively pressed; or whether his failure was the result of a combination of these causes, is now beyond determination. A stronger probability than any of these is that the competition of some of the ablest and very foremost men of the State and of the South was too great to be overcome; for the man chosen by the Alabama legislature for Confederate States Senator at this juncture was Richard W. Walker, who was one of the most conspicuous statesmen and leaders of the young republic.

On November 30, 1863, Curry set out for Richmond to serve out the unexpired period of his final term in the House of Representatives. He was nearly a week in reaching the Capitol. Of his subsequent service in this session he has preserved the following record:—

During the session I presided much, and made two speeches,—one in favor of negotiating, even with Benjamin F. Butler, for the exchange of prisoners; and the other on offering commercial privileges to some European nation to recognize us, and intervene with arms.

In the early part of February (1864), a joint committee headed by Semmes of the Senate and Clapp of the House, was appointed to prepare an address to the people of the Confederate States. Senator Semmes was to

draft so much of the address as related to Congressional legislation; but he failed to perform the task. To myself the remainder was assigned. The Committee approved my address. I read it to the House amid much applause; and so enthusiastic was the approbation, that every member of both Houses signed it. Several thousand copies were ordered to be published, for circulation among the people and in the army. When I joined the army a few months afterwards, the officers, knowing my authorship of the address, gave me most cordial and flattering receptions.

Before Congress adjourned, I purchased cavalry equipments, intending to join the 53rd Alabama Cavalry regiment, in which my brother Thomas was a captain. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart had previously written a letter to President Davis, asking my appointment as Judge of the military court for his corps. Gen. Longstreet also tendered me a position on his staff.

Congress adjourned, and Curry's term of service expired on February 18, 1864, with the clouds thickening about the doomed Confederacy. He went South to complete his arrangements for entering the army, moved by an eager spirit of aiding the cause to which he had devoted himself in whatever way his service might prove available. He reached Talladega on the 24th; and on the 15th of March, at the invitation of General Leonidas Polk, the Bishop-soldier of the Confederacy, he went to Demopolis, in the western part of the State, where at a grand review of the ragged army of the South, he had the pleasure of addressing several acres of soldiers.

Before the expiration of the sixty days' furlough which he had obtained upon the adjournment of Congress, he received an unsolicited appointment

from President Davis to the position of Commissioner under the Habeas Corpus Act, to serve with General Joseph E. Johnston's army, but not under him.

"My duties were judicial," he states, "—to investigate charges of disloyalty and treason preferred against civilians; and hence, by some persons, I am called 'Judge.'"

"I went to Dalton, Georgia, in April, 1864; and having little to do in connection with my office, I spent the most of my time in visiting the various camps, and familiarizing myself with military movements. Many brigades were addressed by me; and my services in this line were much sought after. Gen. Johnston had a grand review, to infuse fresh confidence into his men. The display of banners and muskets and mimic warfare was very magnificent.

"A gracious revival pervaded the army, while in camp. Meetings were held every night. Chaplains and other preachers held religious services. I heard Gen. M. P. Lowry, a Baptist minister, in command of a Mississippi brigade, and an officer much trusted by Gen. Johnston, quite often. Hundreds of soldiers would gather in the open air to hear the simple gospel; and the converts were very numerous.

"The Georgia Baptist Convention met this spring in Atlanta; and I attended and made an address on army colportage. Here I saw for the first time Governor Joseph E. Brown, who was a member of the Convention."

Curry was not yet an ordained minister; but his notes are full of references to religious matters. He has left an account of religion in the Southern army among the soldiers, in his "Civil History of the Confederate States"; and no one can read the frequent entries which he has made in his journals and *memorabilia* without a deep sense of his piety and of his lofty spiritual character. The religious spirit seems

from the beginning to have dominated his life; and, over and above the figure of the politician, statesman, orator, and educator, shines about him with an ever increasing lustre the halo of an humble servant of Christ.

When in May, 1864, General Johnston began his retreat towards Atlanta, he requested Curry to serve on his staff as special aide. Inasmuch as the latter's regular official duties were suspended by the stress and exigency of military operations, he consented to accept this office; and thus became attached to General Johnston's staff, of which he remained a member until his detail elsewhere in the following July.

Curry's associations with General Johnston became close and intimate; and he came, from observation and study, to form a very high estimate of the character and ability of the great Confederate general, who as a tactician, disciplinarian, and a master of logistics by the impartial testimony of military criticism, was without a superior in the armies of the Confederacy.

"Gen. Johnston," he writes of the retreat before Sherman, "conducted this campaign with unsurpassed skill and strategy, thwarting the enemy's plans and designs, inflicting heavy losses upon him, losing not over five thousand of his own men, whose enthusiastic confidence he preserved to the end. In this retreat, such was the forethought of the commander, that while preserving and improving the *morale* of his men, the Commissary was managed with consummate energy and ability. . . .

"At Cartersville a battle-order was read, proper disposition of troops was made for attacking the enemy,—

and with shouts and strong hopes our boys reversed their march. Hood, on the right, was to attack, and to be supported by Polk in the centre and Hardee on the left. By some fatal misinformation, Hood, instead of attacking, fell back to his lines of the morning, reporting that he was flanked. His blunder and error defeated the plan. Johnston was excited and mad at the frustration of a plan devised and prepared for some days before. Still he arranged his men for meeting the enemy on the next day. In the morning, his purpose was to attack Sherman's army in detail, knowing they were divided and separated by travelling on two roads. At night-fall Gen. Johnston, with several of us, rode along the line; and Gen. Johnston remarked on the rapidity and tact with which our boys had thrown up temporary breast-works. As we returned to headquarters, the General told us to get a good rest, as we should have plenty of work on to-morrow. An hour or so after retiring (Col. E. J. Harvie, an Inspector-general and myself tented together), we were summoned to Gen. Johnston's tent. At a council, Hood said that he could not hold his position; Polk was doubtful; Hardee wanted to fight. Gen. Johnston reluctantly, and ever since regretfully, yielded to two of his corps commanders, and gave orders to fall back across the river. I was sent to Gen. Wheeler's camp, some distance on the right, to summon him to Gen. Johnston, to receive instructions about protecting our rear with his cavalry."

Curry's estimate of Johnston has value as affording an intimate view of a man who did not wear his heart on his sleeve:

"Frequently I rode with General Johnston at night, and he would, when in a talking mood, tell me of Marlborough's and Wellington's and Napoleon's campaigns, which seemed as familiar to him as the alphabet. When

he had travelled as far as he intended, he would dismount, wrap himself in a blanket, and be asleep in five minutes. He was singularly reticent in reference to his plans,—kept his own counsels, but had marvellous facility in finding out the movements and plans of the enemy. The cavalry was utilized and made to subserve its legitimate office of acting as eyes and ears for the infantry and artillery.”

After the war was ended, and the events of that momentous struggle had become matters of history, General Johnston, in a conversation with Curry, said to him that he would not have asked anything better of Sherman than what he attempted with Hood. But Hood failed him in the ultimate issue; and the event, which Johnston planned and wished, was not to be. Johnston and Sherman, as great military tacticians, were antagonists worthy each of the other. They were pitted against each other in many indecisive contests, where some extraneous circumstance, beyond the control of either, frustrated their respective plans; and it seems that Death, the great conqueror, at the very end, preserved the impartial balance between them. “By an irony of fate,” writes Curry in his later years, “Gen. Johnston, as pall-bearer at the funeral of Gen. Sherman, on a wet and cold day, contracted a cold which resulted in his death.”

On the 9th of July, 1864, Johnston reached his fortifications at Atlanta in safety. During the progress of the ensuing siege, Curry went across the country on horseback to Talladega. On the 17th of July, during his absence, Johnston was relieved of the command of the army of the defense, and Hood was put in his place. Soon after Curry

reached Atlanta, upon his return from Talladega, his office as Commissioner under the Habeas Corpus Act expired by limitation; and at the request of General Joseph Wheeler, he joined that officer as special aide, in an expedition to travel in the rear of Sherman's army, and to cut his communications. It was a congenial duty to the diminutive Confederate General, whose soul was bigger than his body, and who will be remembered in history, not only for his heroic devotion to the cause of the Confederacy, but no less for his loyalty to a reunited country, which made him one of the most picturesque figures in the Spanish-American *emeute* of 1898.

Curry writes of this episode with Wheeler:—

We first struck the road at Dalton, and captured the place after a brisk little engagement, taking about 100 prisoners. . . . Moving up the railroad, and tearing up rails, we encountered some colored troops, the first I had seen. We marched to Cleveland, hoping to cross the Tennessee River; but the late heavy rains had swelled it, so as to be not fordable. We passed through Athens, and some stores were "gutted." On this expedition we were forbidden to encumber horses with any surplus clothing; and we ate just what we "picked up," *en route*. For a portion of the time our principal food was green corn. Gen. Wheeler was compelled to make a wide detour to cross the swollen river, which he finally accomplished, with a little resistance east of Knoxville. While tearing up the railroad at McMillan's Depot, we had a little fight and dispersed the enemy. As the railroad between Chattanooga and Nashville was the line of communication to be cut, the General struck across the country.

He requested me to cross the Clinch River at Clinton, to the right of his line of march, and get what informa-

tion I could. With a few men I hurried on, and came to a country mill, with a large "overshot" wheel, situated on a beautiful stream of water, and embowered in a dense forest. Two Federal soldiers were captured, and a middle-aged woman, bare-footed, in homespun frock, apparently the owner of the mill, came to the door and accosted me. The door was about ten feet from the ground, and a broad slab was the only means of entrance and exit. Being of Union sympathies, and furious because of the capture of the men, she poured upon my head, vehemently and volubly, a torrent of oaths, the most vulgar, blasphemous and horrid that I ever heard fall from human lips. Threatening me with vengeance from a brigade of soldiers, which she affirmed was nearby, she began to descend the pathway from the mill, without ceasing her vocabulary of opprobrious and disgusting epithets. Riding my horse across the slab, I informed her that she must remain where she was. This infuriated her afresh, and drew upon me another volley, not less offensive and wicked than she had given previously, of her abundant imprecations. Persisting in the avowal of her purpose, I ordered one of my men to tie her, and put her on one of the captured horses, and carry her to headquarters. Quieted and convinced by my calm purpose, she withdrew to the mill, and we pursued our journey. . . .

By the way, the rural population of East Tennessee was unrefined, ignorant, vicious and disloyal to the Confederacy.

Curry, continuing his account of his military experiences of this period, writes:—

We crossed the railroad south of Nashville; but our circuitous journeying and long delay had defeated the project of breaking up communications. Tearing up the road a little, we marched towards Franklin, where we

had quite a severe engagement, and General Kelly, an accomplished young officer, was mortally wounded. I was in a few paces of him when he was shot. Under a flag of truce General Wheeler requested the kind attentions of Colonel Brownlow, in command of the opposing troops, to his friend and comrade, and it is a proper tribute to Colonel Brownlow to say that the Confederate officer, during his few remaining days, received the kindness that a chivalrous adversary delights to render.

At a little town south of Franklin, we had another engagement; and there I saw women on the streets, in the midst of the fray, cheering our men. The tyranny of Federal occupation drove them nearly to despair. Travelling south, the corps forded the Tennessee River, a dangerous enterprise, below Decatur, Alabama; and while General Wheeler halted to rest his command and await orders and information from Gen. Hood, who had been "flanked" out of Atlanta, and whipped, I made a "flying trip" to Talladega.

On the 6th of October, 1864, Curry started for North Alabama to discharge his duties as Judge Advocate with a military court, composed of General Leroy Pope Walker of Alabama, Colonel Dowd of Mississippi, Colonel House of Tennessee, and another officer.

"We reached Courtland, General Roddy's headquarters," he writes, "on the 17th. Reporting to General Roddy, who greatly desired my presence and assistance, on account of the disturbed state of affairs in North Alabama, I was appointed his aide *pro tempore*. There was much disloyalty in that portion of the State, and the facility of intercourse with the Federal army made cautious dealing very necessary."

On October 30 Generals Hood and Beauregard reached Courtland, *en route* for Nashville. On

November 2 General Roddy and his staff arrived at Tuscumbia, where Hood was then encamped, and was slowly getting ready for his proposed invasion of Tennessee. General Beauregard had already departed. Curry continues:—

The difference betwixt his (Hood's) and General Johnston's handling of troops was most manifest. General Hood seemed to be at a loss what to do; and his equipments and appointments, for which no blame attaches to him, were most inadequate.

General Roddy, with his brigade of cavalry, was ordered west, to make observations and to prevent any movement from Memphis. By means of a pontoon bridge, General Hood and his army crossed the Tennessee River to Florence; and on Sunday, November 21, started northwards for Tennessee. Meanwhile Roddy's brigade, to which Curry was attached, remained at Iuka and Corinth. About this time Colonel Josiah Patterson, commanding the Fifth Alabama regiment, was assigned to other duties; and Curry was transferred to the command of the regiment with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. The circumstances of this promotion of one, who was scarcely more than a civilian in experience, were recalled in a letter written in 1897, by Colonel Patterson:—

MEMPHIS, TENN., Oct. 22, 1897.

DR. J. L. M. CURRY,

MY DEAR SIR: Soon after your retirement from the Congress of the Confederate States I met you at General Wheeler's headquarters, when you told me you had entered the army. About that time the Lt. Colonel of my Regiment, the 5th Alabama Cavalry, was appointed Colonel of the 10th Alabama Cavalry, thereby making a

vacancy in my Regiment. The officers of my Regiment, without exception, waived right to promotion, and you were, by the unanimous request of the officers of the Regiment, promoted to the rank of Lt. Colonel. Subsequently I, with the rank of Colonel, commanded the brigade to which the 5th Alabama Cavalry was attached; and you, with the rank of Lt. Colonel, commanded that Regiment to the close of the war.

Very truly yours,

JOSIAH PATTERSON.

Curry assumed the duties of his new office at Corinth on the 29th; and at dress-parade he made the regiment an address, which was received with the applause that was the usual accompaniment of his oratory and his personal popularity. That his rapid advancement as a soldier was not due to political or other influence than that commanded by his military worth, was later attested by high authority. In a speech on the floor of the House of Representatives of the United States, March 9, 1898, General Joseph Wheeler asserted that Curry had earned his rank by bravery in battle.

With the zeal and industry and adaptability which characterized him in every station in life, he set himself to work at once to become proficient in the art of war.

"I soon mastered Wheeler's Tactics," he writes, "and drilled the Regiment every day, Sundays excepted, when not engaged in active service. The Regiment was undisciplined and badly armed, and not homogeneous. While my relations with the Regiment were pleasant, and I had the entire confidence of officers and men, it was a sore trial to put and keep in 'fighting trim' men who were generally not well officered, and who were

partially demoralized by serving in the immediate vicinity of their homes and families. It is simple justice, however, to say that I never saw more gallantry and courage than were frequently displayed by some of the officers and men.

"In this connection, I can do no better than stop and pay a just tribute to General Roddy. He has been much misrepresented, and since the war his conduct has not been free from censure. I never witnessed in him any other than a jealous and watchful purpose to serve his country to the best of his ability. He had a difficult command, requiring much tact and patience to manage, and a wide extent of territory to guard; and of his personal courage there can be no question."

On December 24 Curry and his command reached Rogersville in Northern Alabama, near the Tennessee line. Here he was ordered back by General Hood, who had only a few days before fought the disastrous battles of Franklin and Nashville. Curry accordingly fell back on the 25th, moving in a southwestward direction to Florence. It was a cold, wet day; and there was scarcely a mouthful of food for either men or horses. "I have no pleasant associations," he declares, "of that Christmas." Thousands of soldiers were retreating from Tennessee in confusion and disorder; and the roads were so cut up by wagons and artillery as to be almost impassable.

On December 29th, 1864, Curry's regiment marched to Pond Spring, east of Courtland; and on the next day, with about one hundred men, he fought a regiment of Federal cavalry, and was driven back to Courtland.

"Infantry and cavalry," he states, "were completely

demoralized, regarding our defeat as accomplished and resistance as hopeless. With such men as I could organize I had several skirmishes with Yankees,—very nearly escaping capture, as the enemy charged within a few paces and fired in very uncomfortable proximity. I should have surrendered, but that I dreaded the imprisonment and the separation from my family.”

From the first to the tenth of January, 1865, Curry and the enemy played at hide and seek in Northern Alabama, through Franklin, Lawrence and Morgan counties. One night he enjoyed the luxury of a bed in Newburg, at the house of Mr. McCaughey, the father of his adjutant. About the twelfth of the month Colonel Patterson rejoined the regiment, near Sim's Mill in Morgan County; and Curry's labors and anxieties as commanding officer were relieved.

On the 20th of the month Curry learned of the extreme illness of his wife, and started home, in company with two gentlemen of the name of Orr, who lived near Danville, Alabama. He reached home on the 23rd, where he remained till the 31st. On that date, with a sense of duty impelling him to return to the front, he left, and never saw his wife again. Reaching the camp at Sim's Mill on February 3, he was once more put in command of his regiment, a portion of which was employed in guarding a long stretch of the river.

On March 16, 1865, he was assigned command in North Alabama, having under him the Fifth Alabama Cavalry and Stewart's Battalion. At that time a cavalry corps, under the Federal General Wilson, was preparing for a raid through Alabama. By courier-line Curry reported nearly every day to

General Wirt Adams, at Montevallo. On the 25th, in obedience to orders, he moved southwards. At Elyton, on the afternoon of the 28th, the Federals came into the town just as Curry's force had passed. A half hour later he would have been intercepted. On the 30th Colonel Patterson resumed command; and Curry, asking for and obtaining a detail, concealed himself near the road, in order to get information concerning the strength of the enemy. He counted nearly four thousand, and reported to General Forrest, who was advancing to meet the foe. Wilson's whole command numbered nearly ten thousand men. Curry, being cut off by the delay in counting, had to make a wide detour, and was unable to join the main body of the Confederates for two days. Overtaking General Forrest's command, and rejoining his own on April 1, he was ordered to protect the rear of the Confederate column.

"Deploying what men I had," he writes, "I skirmished with the enemy through Plantersville, slowly falling back to give the wagons time to get out of the way. While resisting the attack, a ball, with a heavy thump, struck and entered my haversack, perforating my coat, breaking a hair-brush, and making sixty holes in a *New York Tribune*, which I had been carrying for two weeks without an opportunity to open and read. This paper, now in the Confederate Museum at Richmond, undoubtedly saved my life. When Greeley was a candidate for the Presidency, I sent him by a friend a jocular message, that if elected he could not take the oath of office, as he had certainly given 'aid and comfort' to his country's enemy."

On Sunday, April 2, 1865, Curry was the last man to enter the breastworks at Selma, where he

found General Forrest's troops posted, awaiting the Federal attack. In a few minutes the enemy appeared in front; and, after reconnoissance, attacked in force, quite to Curry's left, where Armstrong's brigade was stationed. The firing was very heavy for twenty or thirty minutes; then the Federals charged the breastworks, and driving the Confederates pell-mell, followed the fugitives into Selma, killing and capturing the larger part of them. The Confederate command, hemmed in by the Alabama and Cahawba Rivers, was in desperate straits, from which it might escape only with great difficulty.

Curry, who makes record of the episode as including "the most terrible night of his life," says:—

I held my position, not violently assailed, until the enemy had gotten betwixt me and the town. Seeing everything in confusion, and our army routed, my men became uncontrollable, and sought safety. With a squad adhering to me, I crossed the fortifications, as to go into Selma was capture or death. Avoiding the road, on which were Federal troops, I soon found myself in the woods, and in a swamp. May I be spared from such another night! The Federals fired the government buildings, the foundries and naval works and magazines, which amid the awful explosions ignited and consumed the business portion of the city. The din was fearful. The rattle of musketry, the music of brass bands, the explosion of shells, the shrieks of women, made a second Tophet. The burning town made an illumination which extended for several miles. Amid the hurraing of victors, and the tramping of pursuers and pursued, I walked nearly the whole night. The next day, avoiding the scouts of the cavalry, I found my way to Mr. Mims', and spent the night.

The next day, with two men, I lay in the woods. At

night, as the country was full of cavalry, we travelled; and just at day I paid a negro five dollars in Confederate money,—all of any kind I had,—to put us across Cahawba River in a canoe. A young horse, which Mr. Mims loaned me, swam by the boat. On the west bank of the river we were safe. My two companions soon left me, and I rode to Marion. On the street I met Judge Porter King, who invited me to his house, and fed myself and horse. I found in the town General Forrest, who had effected his escape from Selma; and I promptly reported to him for duty.

Curry spent a period of several days, extending from the 8th to the 14th of April, at Greensboro, Alabama, in collecting what remained of his scattered command. On the 14th he received orders to muster his forces in the vicinity of Montevallo or Elyton, and to guard the prairie country against any approach of the enemy from the direction of the Tennessee River. The orders were from Forrest, and were characteristic; for they contained the further instruction that Curry was to report to General Dick Taylor at Meridian, to General Adams at Montgomery, or to Forrest himself at Gainesville, or wherever he might establish his headquarters. Colonel Stewart was to report to Curry; and Curry, in addition to “guarding the prairie-country” with his scanty and disorganized troops, was to establish a courier-line from Greensboro to Talladega,—a distance of over a hundred miles.

Everything was in great confusion and turmoil; but in the midst of it, officers and soldiers alike were in happy ignorance that General Lee had already surrendered at Appomattox on the 9th of the month, to an overwhelming enemy, what was

left of the Army of Northern Virginia,—a ragged and starved and footsore remnant of “that incomparable array of bright bayonets and tattered uniforms,” whose fidelity and courage continued unfailing to the end.

On the morning of April 17, while trying to get his wagons and men across the flush and flooded Cahawba River at Centreville, Curry received by private messenger the intelligence that his wife had died on April 8, nine days before; and that her death had been hastened by a current and apparently authentic report that her husband had been killed at the battle of Selma. It was a tragic ending to a union that had been a very happy one.

“She was a pure, noble Christian woman, and a devoted wife,” is the tribute which he pays to her memory. “For eighteen years our lives had run peacefully and happily together. No woman sympathized more heartily with the Confederacy, or labored more self-denyingly for the soldiers and their families. My wife was a member of the Presbyterian Church.”

Stricken sorely in his affections, and with the cause, that he held close at heart, in apparently desperate emergency, and in reality already lost, he started homeward on a journey that enabled his official duty to coincide with his desire to be with his family.

“Turning over my little command to Colonel Stewart,” he writes, “I proceeded to reconnoitre and locate the proposed line of couriers, and to look after my motherless children,—Susie Lamar and Manly Bowie. I reached Talladega and my home on the 18th, the day of Johnston’s surrender to Sherman. As I neared my home, my slaves

ran up the road to greet me, with sympathy at my loss and gladness at my return."

On April 21 a brigade of Federal cavalry passed through Talladega.

"Gathering a few soldiers," says Curry, "I counted them, and then watched their movements, to report. While in a lane, I captured a Federal soldier, and took his mule and arms. As I was protecting my prisoner from the thoughtless insults of the men who were with me, I was very near being shot. Unnoticed, another Federal soldier had approached within thirty yards of me. When I discovered him he was taking deliberate aim at me. Gathering my bridle and spurring my horse, I charged upon him, and fired my pistol. He fled and I was only too glad of an opportunity to escape, as several of his companions were in sight."

A Federal garrison, under General Crysler of New York, occupied Talladega on May 13th. To this command, Curry, having learned of Lee's surrender at Appomattox and of Johnston's in North Carolina, and realizing that the great struggle was at an end, reported and surrendered; and was paroled. By order of General Canby, he was arrested on the 30th of the same month; but was again discharged on his personal parole the same day.

"The arrest," he states, "grew out of a 'cock and bull story' in the New York *Tribune*, that I had favored the assassination of Lincoln and the cruel treatment of Federal prisoners. General Crysler treated me uniformly with consideration and kindness; but he was accused, and probably not wrongfully, of levying 'blackmail' on citizens, and taking cotton for his own use. His quartermaster took corn and forage and meat from me without

the slightest compensation, and a Michigan regiment robbed me of three mules in open daylight. Of course the rascals charged 'Uncle Sam' for these purchases."

Talladega County was now under martial law; and the people were so crushed that even a corporal could commit almost any depredation upon persons or property with entire impunity. "The Freedman's Bureau was instituted," says Curry, "and some of the fanatical or corrupt agents sought to make masters support their former slaves, or divide with them their property. Generally, the negroes behaved well. Mine, with one exception, remained on the place as usual. I stayed at home quietly on my farm with my two children."

In September, 1865, a bill of information was filed against Curry in the Federal District Court at Montgomery, for the confiscation of his property, on the grounds that he had been engaged in armed rebellion against the United States; that he had subscribed largely to the Confederate Cotton Loan; that he had furnished money, provisions, clothing, and other materials for the use of persons engaged in the "rebellion," and that he had used and circulated the paper currency and bonds of the State of Alabama and of the Confederacy, said notes and bonds having been issued for the purpose of waging war against the United States Government.

"This information from the District Attorney," says Curry, "was never served on me by the Marshal, but was returned as executed; and I was thus at the mercy of as despicable and unprincipled a set of adventurers and robbers as ever, under official sanction, plundered a helpless people. I employed Judge William R. Chilton to look after my interests; and he compromised with the

officials, 'hungry as dogs and merciless as wolves,' by the payment of \$250, the receipt for which lying before me, is the evidence of the robbery."

In October, Curry went to Washington to obtain a pardon, travelling by way of Chattanooga, Nashville, Louisville and Cincinnati. East Tennessee was not considered even at that time altogether safe for persons who had been in active sympathy with the Confederate cause; and hence Curry's wide detour to reach the capitol.

"On the 22nd," he writes, "I arrived at the capitol city, Congress being in session. On the 23rd, unattended by any person, I saw the Attorney General and President Johnson. The latter received me courteously and kindly. To my application for pardon, he made no immediate reply; but talked freely about the condition of the country and the state of feeling at the South.

"On my rising to leave, he expressed a wish for a further conversation, and told me to call next morning at the State Department, and the pardon would be ready for me. In Congress I had had a pleasant but not intimate acquaintance with the President, when he was a Senator from Tennessee. I was, of course, prompt in calling on the 24th at the State Department, then in the upper portion of the Treasury Building; and after making and signing the required oath, the pardon, with the signatures of the President and of 'W. Hunter, acting Secretary of State,' attested by the Great Seal, was handed to me."

As pertinent to his subsequent relations with the Federal Government, in whose service he later occupied a distinguished position, it may be stated here that it was not until February 27, 1877, that the United States Senate passed the bill under which

Curry's political disabilities were removed. The signing of this bill on March 2 was one of the last official acts of President Grant.

On the same day that he received his pardon, he started South for Richmond; and travelling thence he reached his home in Talladega on the last day of the month.

CHAPTER XII

PEACE AND SERVICE

BEFORE the War between the States politics had absorbed the time and attention of most thoughtful men in Alabama and the lower South, but it was politics of a high kind. The war-smitten people of that region were now to grapple for their very social existence with another and inconceivably degraded form of politics. For six years, during the fateful period of Reconstruction, fuller of bitterness and suffering and degradation than the fewer years of battle and defeat, they experienced poverty and detraction and woe under the vicious rule of the carpet-bagger, the "scalawag" and the newly-enfranchised negro. Of the evil domination of the State by the creatures of the Freedman's Bureau, and of its looting by legislatures composed of negroes and their more offensive and reckless white allies, space in this narrative does not admit the telling. The awful mistake of the reconstruction theory, now universally admitted, and the eternal infamy of the reconstruction period are written in indelible letters upon the life of the South. Its influences must be inferred rather than discussed in these pages.

In November of 1865, Curry, with his heart set upon the cause of religion as the one eternal thing to which a man of soul could repair amid the overthrow of all old standards, attended the Baptist State Con-

vention at Marion, Alabama, and was elected its presiding officer. During the session of the convention, the trustees of Howard College, then located at Marion, a small college set up by the Baptist people, elected him President of that institution. At this time, as may naturally be supposed, the finances of the school were at a low ebb and on an uncertain basis. But there were those who realized, as defeated peoples have done in many ages, that the resuscitation of their impoverished and prostrate country lay in the hope of educating the unvanquished boys and girls, with a new world awaiting their activities. Out of the abundance of their poverty these people subscribed with generous unselfishness to the guarantee of the President's salary, which was fixed at \$5,000 in currency, or \$3,500 in gold.

Curry accepted the Presidency of the college, and removed in December, 1865, to Marion, taking with him his son, Manly, then a boy eight or nine years of age, whose sister, Susie, a young girl of fifteen, had in the preceding October been entered as a pupil in the Judson Female Institute, in the same town.

Curry writes of his work in connection with the college:—

Most of my time, after a little teaching in moral and mental science, and political economy, was given to travel through the States, and public addresses in behalf of the college and general education. . . . During the year I visited Selma, Montgomery, Tuskegee, Jacksonville, Talladega, Mobile, Gainesville, and Mississippi.

On the 28th of January, 1866, he was ordained to the gospel ministry; and, as a fitting accompaniment to the statement of so serious and important an

event in his life, his own account of his religious history and experience may be here appropriately set down:—

“In early life,” he writes, “my parents were not Christians, although moral, upright and regular attendants on religious worship. The only denominations in the lower part of Lincoln County were Methodists and Baptists. I remember to have heard George F. Pierce, the Bishop, when he was a young man. The first missionary sermon I ever heard was at Double Branch meeting-house, by Dr. C. Mallory. It was in the week, drew a large audience, and produced a profound impression. The Baptist preachers I remember were Adams, a colored man, who preached acceptably to white people, Taylor, Juriah Harris, and John L. West. The last was often at my father’s. My father’s house was always a welcome and hospitable home for all preachers.

“There were no Sunday Schools near me when I was young. In fact, I never was a member of a Sunday school until I was married. In early youth I had no distinctive religious impressions or convictions. My sensibilities and emotions were sometimes awakened, but were physical excitements and had no religious basis. All my life I was outwardly moral. I never uttered an oath, and never gambled, although I learned to play cards when I was eight or nine years old. When at college, I attended church, more because it was a college regulation and to see the girls than for any other purpose. I used to hear Dr. Hoyt, Drs. Curry (now—1877—of New York), Means, Smith, Longstreet, Chambliss, Albert Williams, Branham, &c. Of the Bible, I was stupidly ignorant. During college, I had, as most boys have at some period of their lives, skeptical notions; but I was afraid of them, and deliberately burned, without reading, Paine’s ‘Age of Reason,’ which a class-mate gave to me.

"When at the Law School, I heard Theodore Parker, Dr. Walker, Dr. Kirk, and Baron Stow; but had no convictions of sin, nor desire for salvation.

"After my return from the Mexican War, there was a protracted meeting at Kelly's Springs, and my father was baptized. His baptism made a deep impression on me. During the meeting I was admitted into the church, and was baptized by Elder Samuel Henderson. . . . I have never had any rapturous experiences, any overpowering views of my sinfulness of forgiveness; and to this day, with humiliation I record it, I have never had any special satisfaction in partaking of the Lord's Supper. I know the depravity of my heart, the need of regeneration, my utter inability to change my own heart and character. I believe the Bible, the atonement of Christ, its all sufficiency, and rely simply on Christ's work and grace for salvation. I find most contentment in working for my Master, although I am sure there is no meritoriousness, as procuring salvation, in any human righteousness. I have often wished and prayed for the experiences that some Christians have; but they have been denied me, or possibly, by unbelief I have denied them to myself.

"In 1847, I attended the Alabama Baptist State Convention at Greensboro, Alabama, and was on the Committee on Education. In 1848, and for several successive years, I was a delegate to Coosa River Association, and was the Clerk of the body, writing many of the reports, four of which bear my name. In 1856 I was elected Moderator and so continued when present. In 1856 the East Alabama Baptist Convention was organized, and I was elected President for two or three sessions. In 1865, and for a few sessions thereafter, I was elected President of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

"During these various years, I taught in Sunday Schools, made missionary and other religious addresses, conducted prayer-meetings, and sometimes delivered

what are called exhortations. I may have been called an active lay-member. Once, by my Church, I was chosen deacon and declined. During the war, when in command of my regiment, I sometimes, in the absence of the chaplain, or in default of one, addressed my men on practical religion.

"In the summer of 1865, at Refuge Church, in Talladega County, Rev. William McCain, the pastor, induced me to preach my first regular sermon. In August and September I aided J. J. D. Renfroe, my pastor, and Dr. Spalding, in a meeting in Talladega town. A spectacle, novel and interesting, was that of a Confederate soldier and a Federal soldier, who walked into the water, hand in hand. In September, I aided the same brethren and Brother O. Welch, the pastor, in a meeting at Talladega (now Alpine) church. In December, I assisted Dr. W. H. McIntosh in a meeting at Marion, Alabama. All these meetings were highly successful.

"I have been invited (I write this on 22 March, 1877) to pastorates in Selma, Montgomery, Mobile, Atlanta, Augusta, Wilmington, Raleigh, New Orleans, Memphis, St. Louis, San Francisco, Louisville, Norfolk, Richmond, Baltimore, New York, Boston and Brooklyn; but I have had no inclination or conviction that it was my duty to become exclusively a preacher. At times I love to preach, and I am profoundly convinced that sacerdotal ideas connected with the ministry, or preaching, have been productive of untold evil."

The intimacy, simplicity and candor of this statement not only reveal the pre-occupation of serious minded men of that age in religious matters, but constitute of themselves a sufficient warranty that Curry's discharge of the duties of his most high and sacred office was conscientious and earnest. Although he declined invitation after invitation of the

most flattering character to accept a regular pastorate, he continued nevertheless to do a great deal of preaching. One hundred and nineteen sermons were delivered by him during the first year of his ministry,—an extraordinary intellectual feat, apart from the devotion which it illustrates; while, in addition, he made numerous addresses at prayer-meetings, Sunday Schools, associations, conventions and mass-meetings. He visited Richmond, Baltimore and Washington, and spoke on education and missions. He had beaten the sword of the soldier into the reaping-hook of a spiritual harvest, wherein he labored with an industry and persistence which vindicated his assertion that he “loved to preach.” The influence of the preacher upon the life of the South is a story not yet adequately told. It may be doubted if the world has quite appreciated the singular religious quality of the Southern people and their leaders both in their military struggle and in the period of grim endurance after the conflict. Great revivals frequently swept the armies and preachers turned caissons into pulpits. From the ministry such officers as Pendleton, Lowry, Evans, Capers, Mell, Shoup, Dabney, Harrison, Willis, Peterkin, Polk, Smith, and Chapman entered the army and attained great distinction, and great preachers like Early, Quintard, Marvin, Pierce, Doggett, Palmer, the Hoge's, Jeter, Burrows, the Rylands, Broadus, Minnegerode, Duncan, Father Ryan, shared with the military leaders the admiration and esteem of the soldiers in the ranks. The spectacle of Jackson and Gordon holding torches, in order that the Chaplain might read the Scriptures to the fierce veterans of the eastern armies,

recalls Cromwell and his Ironsides in another age of deep feeling and high purpose. Near the beginning of the year 1866 Curry was invited to become a co-secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society,—one of the most distinguished and important offices of his church; in the following June he was asked to assume the pastorate of the Selma Baptist Church at a salary of \$4,000; and at other times during the year he received calls from the Coliseum Baptist Church, in New Orleans, the Second Baptist Church in Richmond, and the Franklin Square Baptist Church in Baltimore. In November, at the Alabama Baptist State Convention, he was re-elected President of that body.

This is the record of a busy man, honorably, usefully and hopefully employed, and of a tough and vital nature, steeped in moral purpose, that could thus turn without complaint or cynicism from the excitements and ambitions of war and statesmanship to quieter and humbler, but essentially greater, projects of rebuilding and social service. No morbid despair of life, no idle regret for lost and now unavailing causes, no surrender to the adversities and calamities which had befallen him, almost before his prime, possessed the soul of Curry. Undaunted and undismayed, he buckled on the whole armor of faith, and in his works honored God and aided his fellow-man with a will that defeat could not check nor humiliation daunt. Nor were his energies and efforts confined to the assistance and amelioration of those who with himself had been cast down in the wreck of a great struggle. He turned himself in helpful sympathy to the ignorant and humble race, out of whose seeming triumph came to be

wrought an Ilium of woes; and whose new-found friends had laid upon unprepared shoulders a double burden of freedom and of enfranchisement. With the tenderness and affection for the black man which the typical Southern slaveholder preserved to the end, and which the typical Southern slave rewarded with a fidelity and devotion that is unparalleled in the history of the world,—a tenderness which the alien will never comprehend, and a devotion which will never cease to astonish the outsider,—Curry was, from the moment of the fall of the Confederacy, occupied in mind and heart with the probable future of these people. On May 15th, 1866, he held a conference at Marion with Messrs. McIntosh and Raymond, the pastors of the local Baptist and Presbyterian Churches, with reference to the education of the freedmen of the town. They agreed upon a town-meeting, to be held on the 17th of the month; and on that day a preliminary gathering took place, whose object was to devise ways and means towards this desired end. Shortly afterwards, another meeting was held, at which Curry, supported by the two ministers already mentioned, and by ex-Governor Andrew B. Moore, prepared and introduced resolutions favoring the education of the colored people by the white people of the South. It was a wise and prescient act upon his part; and in dealing with the proposition he took an advanced position beyond that of most of his Southern contemporaries, many of whom were paralyzed with fear and wonder at the sudden injection of a great mass of ignorance “into the belly of the constitution.” But Curry met the exigency of the situation with the judgment, the courage, the faith and the

energy that had characterized his earlier career; and for it, in the end, he received his rich reward.

In this year of 1866, he began to keep regularly a record or diary; and the little leather-bound pocket-books contain many entries that bring the past days of a notable but disjointed and despairing period and a noble career vividly before the reader's eyes. Among many other details of this critical year after the war, when despair and hope alternately swayed the Southern balances, we find him writing cheerfully and without repining. Not a few of these entries are quite insignificant, alone and in themselves; but they go together to show the equal temper of his heart and mind, his quick interest in the life about him, his zest for work, and may thus serve to illustrate his character and conduct:—

Saturday, February 3 (Entry made at Meridian, Miss.)
Carpet-sack taken from me by mistake, with clothes and all my sermons. Left for Mobile at 5 P. M.

Tuesday, February 6. Called on Miss Augusta Evans.

Saturday, February 10. Called with Miss Augusta Evans on Mrs. Chandron, who translated Joseph II,—a most accomplished and pleasant woman.

Monday, February 12. Spent Monday night at Mr. Evans',—the father of Miss Augusta J. Evans, author of *Inez*, *Beulah*, *Macaria* and *St. Elmo*.

Saturday, March 31. Took tea at General Lawler's with General Willis Boccock and Prof. A. J. Battle.

Tuesday, April 3. At 3.30 P. M. delivered a "little" lecture to the students of Howard.

Wednesday, April 11. (Entry made at Tuskegee, Ala.)
Dined with Mr. McDonald. Met Mrs. Covington (*née* Miss Bussy), who knew my father and mother before marriage, and my grandfather and mother, and great-

grandmother, who would never ride, but was a great pedestrian. My mother, when a girl, was cheerful and lively.

Monday, May 14. Informed of a contemplated duel, and mediation requested.

Wednesday, May 16. Officiated for the first time in marrying a couple, Marion M. Burch of Kentucky and Ella L. Curry. Spent the night at Jabez Curry's.

Monday, May 21. Left Marion at 6 A. M. Reached Selma at 9.20 A. M. Preached at night and baptized two young boys. This was my first administration of the ordinance.

Friday, June 1. Duel between M. P. Kennon and Capt. Frank Lumpkin. Two shots. No damage. Adjustment.

Friday, August 31. Invitation to Presidency of Richmond College.

Wednesday, September 12. Reached Montgomery at 9 A. M. Called with Judge Chilton, at 12 M., on Governor Patton, just returned from Chicago,—the "inauguration" of the Douglas monument. The Governor hopeful as to political affairs; Chief Justice Walker despondent.

Tuesday, October 9. Commenced teaching in College. Recitations in Moral and Intellectual Philosophy and Rhetoric.

Sunday, November 18. (Entry made in Richmond.) Preached at Second Baptist Church at 11 A. M.

Assisted in communion service at First Baptist Church at 4 P. M., and talked to converts.

Dr. Steel and Messrs. Farrer, Courtney and Ellyson, a committee of the Second Baptist Church, waited on me with a request to accept pastorate.

Preached at night in First Baptist Church to a large congregation. Drs. Stiles, Ryland and Burrows on the stand.

A busy day, surely!

More than ten years later Curry wrote again, under date of that same full day, in one of the little brown leather-backed diaries:—

On the 18th of November, happy day, I was accepted by Mary W. Thomas. I have had occasion, every day since, to thank God for this great goodness. I can recall the very spot where my proposal was acceded to.

On Tuesday, January 8, 1867, he made the following entry in his diary:—

Weighed to-day 157 pounds;—more than I ever weighed before.

On 28th February, 1867, in his official capacity of President of Howard College, he entered into correspondence with Mr. Robert C. Winthrop, with reference to the Peabody donation, a gift of three millions of dollars by which Mr. George Peabody of Massachusetts established what became known as the Peabody Education Fund. This correspondence was the beginning of a later very close personal and official relationship between the two men, the details of which are to be found in subsequent chapters of this narrative.

In March of this year he was instructed by the trustees of his college, who armed him at the same time with a resolution of their confidence, to visit Virginia and Baltimore, for the purpose of securing some part, if possible, of the Peabody Fund for their own institution. Accordingly he set out for Richmond about the middle of the month, spending some days on the way, and remaining in Virginia only a short time. He appears to have been sick during a portion of this trip; and he did not reach

Baltimore as he had contemplated. At the end of the first week in April he was again at Marion; and there is no record in his journals and notes of any fruitful results of the journey.

On June 17, 1867, he set out for another trip to Virginia, which had in view a different object than procuring aid for Howard College from the Peabody Fund. He travelled tranquilly, as one with a serene and untroubled mind, who having earned some days of leisure, proposed to enjoy them. He stopped at various places on his way northward. Among others, he was at Charlottesville on the 21st.

"I visited the University in the afternoon," he wrote in his diary; in which he always alludes to Jefferson's great educational institution at Charlottesville as "the University," apparently taking it for granted, as did most Southerners, and all Virginians, that there could be no difficulty in recognizing its identity. While in Charlottesville he visited the grave of Jefferson, in the graveyard on the mountain side; and Monticello, where the "sentinel over the rights of men" had spent his last years in his home upon the summit of the Little Mountain.

On the next day after his visit to Jefferson's house and burial-place, he reached Richmond.

The entries in the little brown-backed books had during the preceding months contained frequent mention of "M. W. T.", and of a correspondence in which the owner of those initials was a participant; and on the 18th of the preceding November,—
"happy day!"—it showed the record of his engagement. So that the reader, who has followed these pages, may reasonably have surmised ere this, that

Curry was visiting Richmond to be present at his own wedding.

On June 25, 1867, he and Miss Mary W. Thomas were married. She was the daughter of Mr. James Thomas, a prominent business man of Richmond, whom Curry, when a Confederate Congressman, had met, as he records, with her parents and numerous sisters, under a tree on the lawn of Mr. Thomas' residence, upon a certain summer's day, when she was "a sweet, beautiful girl of seventeen." The marriage ceremony was performed at 8.30 P.M., as he punctiliously relates, in the First Baptist Church, with Rev. William D. Thomas and Dr. J. L. Burrows officiating. A large and brilliant assemblage witnessed the solemn ceremony; and the bridegroom writes that besides the officiating ministers, there were present on the platform, as interested spectators, Doctors Jeter, Ryland, T. G. Jones and Shaver, and Reverend Messrs. Grimsby, Hume, and Morgan of England.

"From that day," says Curry in 1877, "our lives have flowed happily together, like two streams whose waters are indissolubly blended. Not a harsh word has ever passed the lips of either, nor an unkind thought been harbored for a moment in either heart. Now, after ten years of union, I can bless God for such a gift, and truly say that earth contains not a wiser, purer, nobler, better woman."

Surely no wife ever won a finer tribute than that!

An hour or two after their marriage Curry and his wife left Richmond for New York; and thence, on Saturday, June 29, they set sail for Europe. In the party were William D. Thomas, Dr. J. M. Williams of Baltimore, Professor Huntingdon, Rev. Thomas

Hume, Jr., of Portsmouth, Dr. G. W. Samson and his family, and Messrs. Wheeler, Johnson and Farnham, all of whom appear to have been friends or acquaintances of Curry's, and whose presence he notes in his diary.

Their trip abroad, which was not so common an experience as it is to-day, covered a period of four months, and included England, Scotland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and France.

On July 13, runs the diary, they were at Westminster Palace, Westminster Abbey, and the British Museum; on the next day, Sunday, they heard with interest a sermon from Spurgeon. In Italy, on the 24th, they visited Pompeii, and climbed Vesuvius; at Florence, on August 1, they traversed the galleries of the Uffizi and Pitti palaces, and dwelt with unaccustomed eyes upon the glories of an ancient and unexcelled art; and there they visited the American sculptor, Hiram Powers, in his studio. On August 23, still following the now beaten track of the later tourist, they returned to Paris, where they remained until October 5, in attendance upon the Exposition and visiting the various places in its vicinity of historical or artistic interest. Here, in Paris, after a lapse of years, Curry makes record that he heard Patti sing again, with a charm that had lost nothing of its delight since he had heard her, ten years earlier, in Washington. Setting their faces homeward, by way of England, the Currys once more heard Spurgeon in his great London Tabernacle; and had the pleasure of making his personal acquaintance.

The travellers reached New York October 28, whence they went straight to Richmond, where they tarried only a few days, and arrived at Marion early

in November. The next month he attended the State Baptist Convention at Mobile, and was again and for the third time elected its President.

His "love of preaching" meanwhile continued a potent influence with him. Indeed, "love of preaching" but mildly expresses the deepest impulse of the man's nature, which was to teach and move his fellows. During 1867, in spite of his wanderings and various distractions, he preached forty sermons,—one of which was in Paris, and another in Edinburgh; and delivered forty-two addresses and lectures.

On July 10, while he was off the coast of Ireland, in his trip abroad, he was honored with the degree of Doctor of Laws by Mercer University, Georgia, of which he made record in his notes, with many exclamation points.

Mercer University, Georgia, conferred on me, to-day, the Degree of Doctor of Laws!!!!

The later months of 1867 and the earlier ones of 1868 were busily occupied by Curry, who in addition to the duties of his collegiate office, was engaged in travelling here and there, and preaching and making addresses before religious and educational gatherings. At Talladega, on January 13, yielding to the earnest persuasion of his old friends and former constituents, he made a speech in opposition to the adoption of the Reconstruction State Constitution. The constitution was legally defeated by the terms of the Congressional enabling act, which required that a majority of the registered vote should be cast; but the Congress, with ruthless disregard of its own act, admitted Alabama into the Union under an unadopted reconstruction con-

stitution; and with it, put in authority a State government, of whom the Lieutenant-Governor, Applegate of Ohio, the Secretary of State, Miller of Maine, the Auditor, Reynolds of Maine, and the Commissioner of Revenue, Keiffer of Ohio, were all officials of the Freedman's Bureau. In the county, in which the State capitol was located, the Reconstructionists nominated a ticket, which was a fair example of others in counties where the Freedman's Bureau most flourished. Their candidates for the legislature were a citizen of Ohio, an Austrian, and three negroes; and those for the county offices of Probate Judge, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Sheriff were all Northerners.

Curry wrote of his speech against the Black and Tan Constitution of Alabama, in 1877, that it was "the only political speech he had made since the War"; but he had made up his mind to get away from the ocean of political degradation and misrule that surrounded him, whose current of iniquity he was powerless to stem. On April 21, 1868, within three months after the election, Curry resigned the Presidency of Howard College. On the 27th, at the urgent request of several of his friends, he withdrew his resignation, provisionally; but, in fact, he never acted in an official capacity for the institution afterwards. An unusual sense of profound disheartenment seems to have come upon him in the contemplation of his surroundings. For once his buoyant spirit lacked resiliency. "The country was too bankrupt," he wrote, "and the political outlook too discouraging, to make a continuance of efforts for endowment desirable."

Long after his State had resumed her position of

honor and dignity in the galaxy of Commonwealths under the rule of her own people, and when her coal and iron had made her a center of interest to the industrial world, Curry made final record in 1901 of his reasons for leaving Alabama:—

No man ever had truer or more devoted friends than honored me with their confidence in Alabama, and it was with deep reluctance that I turned my face away from the State of my boyhood and manhood, which still holds my paramount affection. It seemed unwise to keep my wife and children under radical misrule, and to remain where a generation or more would be needed to recover from the disastrous consequences of the War and hostile legislation.

It is manifest that a sharp conflict arose in his mind between his duty to his region, which he had served so faithfully and which had trusted him so completely, and his duty to his young wife who had joined her fortunes to his.

The claims of wife and children prevailed.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE OLD DOMINION

IT will be recalled that in 1866 Curry had been offered the presidency of Richmond College,—an honor which was declined at the time of its tender. But, when upon his return from Europe in October, 1867, he was notified of his appointment to the chair of History and English Literature in the same institution, he appears to have regarded the proposition with a more favorable consideration. Yet it is scarcely probable that this invitation was in any large sense a determining factor in his removal from Alabama, where he had resided for thirty years. The social and political conditions of reconstruction, which Virginia had so far escaped, and family considerations were the compelling motives, as he has himself recorded, which finally induced his determination to leave his former home.

With his family, he reached Richmond, which thenceforward became his residence, on the 3rd of May, 1868; and leaving his son and daughter there at the house of his father-in-law, Mr. Thomas, he went with Mrs. Curry to Baltimore, to attend the Southern Baptist Convention, which was to meet in that city on the 7th. According to previous arrangement he was to preach the introductory sermon before the Convention; but this plan was prevented by a singular accident. As they were